REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

In complete response to the outstanding Official Action of March 31, 2004, on the above-identified application, reconsideration is respectfully requested. Claims 1-9, 23, 24, 28 and 29 remain in this application. Applicant hereby affirms that claims 10-22, 25-27, and 30-32 are withdrawn from consideration, with traverse.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-9, 23-24, 28 and 29 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over DIONEX, (Determination of Trace Ions in Concentrated Hydrofluoric Acid"; Technical Note 45, pp. 1-11, 1999) in view of Szecsody '527.

The Examiner notes that "Dionex teaches a process for the determination of trace anions in concentrated hydrofluoric acid." Hydrofluoric acid is a weak-acid, which means that doesn't ionize fully in water. It is these neutral, un-ionized species that are retained within the Ion Exclusion preseparator (ICE). It is clearly stated that this ICE unit will have little or no effect on strong-acids.

> "The strong acid ions, such as chloride and sulfate, are excluded and elute as a small peak at approximately nine minutes. The weakly ionized fluoride matrix ions are retained and elute as a large peak." (Top Right Paragraph, Page 4)

One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize that this Dionex Technical Note teaches a process that is only useful to analyze weak-acid solutions. The principle distinguishing feature of this Dionex system is the ICE unit, which would serve no purpose in a strong-acid solution. The anion component of a strong-acid solution are 100% unretained in the ICE column, no matter how dilute or concentrated this strong-acid might be.

Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art would find that the Dionex Technical Note 45 neither teaches nor suggests the present invention.

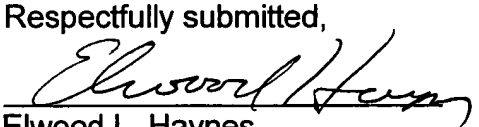
The Examiner notes that Szecsody '527 teaches "that it is known in the art that one may use HPLC detectors and mass spectrometers to analyze anions in a liquid sample." Applicant acknowledged that the "combination of liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry is presently sued for detection and/or quantification of certain species in so-called "neutral organics" (*Page 4, Lines 4 and 5*) Szecsody '527 fails to disclose the use of a mass spectrometer with an *ion-exchange* chromatography system.

Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art would find that Dionex Technical Note 45, either alone or in combination with Szecsody '527, neither teaches nor suggests the present invention.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it is believed that the present application now stands in condition for allowance. Early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone call would expedite the prosecution of the application, he is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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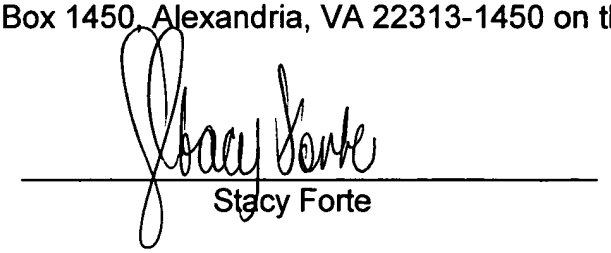
I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on this 9th day of July, 2004.



Stacy Forte